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SPENSER'S FAIRY MYTHOLOGY

BY EDWIN GREENLAW

Spenser's use of fairy mythology, and the fairy mythology that he invented, have alike been neglected, though these matters have an important bearing upon the structure and meaning of the *Faerie Queene*. What makes this neglect the more surprising is that the poem, on the surface at least, belongs to the category of Arthurian romance. Yet since none of the great knights of the Round Table figures in it, and none of the great stories is to be found, as they are found, for example, in Tennyson's *Idylls*, scholars apparently content themselves with recognizing that Spenser imitates the spirit rather than the letter of Arthurian romance, and with identification of scattered incidents or episodes. A German thesis on Spenser's debt to Malory leaves one with the impression that this debt is like the famous snakes of Ireland, and it has even been maintained that for certain elements that are the basis of the structure Spenser was chiefly indebted to Chaucer's *Thopas*, itself a burlesque romance that Spenser, lacking humor, took as seriously as his critics. Not very much progress has been made in this field of Spenser criticism since the days of Warton. Even Miss Winstanley's excellent editions of Books I and II, in which are summaries of the debt to the medieval romances, show few additions in spite of the widespread interest, in recent years, in everything relating to Arthurian romance. The contrast with what has been learned about Spenser's debt to Plato and Aristotle, and to the romantic epics of Ariosto and Tasso, is very striking. Moral allegory, Platonism, and Ariosto, increased in recent years by a clearer perception of Spenser's political allegory, seem to cover most of the investigation of Spenser's sources.

I. *The Realm and its Sovereign*

Robert Laneham's *Letter*, describing the elaborate entertainment that Leicester prepared in honor of the Queen's visit to Kenilworth in 1575, is filled with such materials as Spenser afterwards combined into his poem. The "Princely Pleasures" included chivalry, folklore, classical myth, use of symbol and allegory,

glorification of the sovereign, bits from Malory, music and art, the masque,—all in just such profusion as we find them in the *Faerie Queene*. In it the library of the worthy Captain Cox takes on a sort of fantastic life and goes through its paces like Sir Andrew at Toby's bidding. It isn't art, and it isn't life, but the Elizabethans liked this sort of thing, as many illustrations might be cited to prove. Perhaps Spenser was present; he certainly knew about the pageant, and it might well have suggested some projects to him.

As for example: the outstanding theme in Leicester's pageant is the glorification of Elizabeth. She isn't called a fairy queen, but the suggestion is trembling beneath the surface of all that goes on. The chief figure, among the multitudinous mummers, is the Lady of the Lake. When the Queen and her party approached Kenilworth, which was "situate upon a Rock" surrounded by a "faire Poole, conteyning 111 acres,"¹ they were met by the Lady of the Lake. This personage was on a "movable island" which floated to the land. On reaching harbor, the Lady informed Her Majesty that she had kept the lake since King Arthur's time, but that she now yielded it to the Queen, "with promise of repayre unto the Court."² Near the end of the festivities, Triton, on a "swimming Mermayd," begged a boon of the Queen, to the effect that she should release from enchantment the Lady of the Lake, who had been persecuted by an uncourteous knight. The boon was granted, the Lady freed, and in recompense Arion appeared upon a Dolphin's back and the music that followed so delighted Laneham that he despaired of expressing his pleasure, though French was called to the aid of his English in the attempt.³ Now both these scenes are suggested by "King Arthur's Book," to which there are other references, and they remind us, as the entire pageant reminds us, of the *Faerie Queene*. It is of course only a coincidence, but Laneham describes the adventures of *twelve days*; we are reminded, if we surrender ourselves to the spirit of fancy that permeates the story, of Spenser's "Faery Queen [who] kept her

¹ Report of Henry VIII's surveyors, cited by Furnivall in his edition of the *Letter*, p. 63.

² *Robert Laneham's Letter*, ed. Furnivall, pp. 6-7.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-35.

Annually feaste xii severall dayes." ⁴ But there is more than fancy here. Leicester's entertainment was presided over by the Queen, and these days were filled with "adventures," like that other annual feast "uppon which severall dayes, the occasion of the xii several adventures hapned." Moreover, the unity of the entertainment, if it may be said to have any unity, is found in this idea of a sovereign who takes over a realm that is in truth "fulfild of fairye." Even in Leicester's twelve days' pageant, crude as it is, there is more than a suggestion of the Celtic Otherworld, with its Lady of the Lake, a true *fée*, its magic and enchantment, its fusing of ancient and medieval, its sovereign lady Queen.

With this central theme ready to hand, let us inquire a bit further into Spenser's *faerie*.

The realm of Gloriana is two-fold: England, in the historical allegory; the Celtic Otherworld in the fairy aspect. In the proem to Book II, both senses are found in clear connection. Spenser asks where is "that happy land of Faery," only to remind the reader that every day great regions are being discovered that always have existed though men were unaware. "Certein signes" will reveal this land to the one who seeks; by which he means, of course, such signs as are familiar in Celtic folklore. But he goes on at once to say that Elizabeth may find her own realm to be this "lond of Faery." This double sense is kept throughout the poem, with a variety of effects. Arthur has had a vision of the Fairy Queen, but has sought vainly for her realm. Yet with Guyon he is in Fairy Land all the time. Guyon visits the Celtic Otherworld three times: it is on Phaedria's island; in the Underworld of Mammon; and in Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. On the other hand, Britomart says that she has come from her native soil, "the greater Britaine," to "Faery lond" because she has heard of famous knights and ladies that inhabit that realm. It would be easy to multiply illustrations of this double geography; the one point that I wish to make, as a basis for what is to follow, is that Spenser fuses the well known romance and folklore conception of a land of enchantment, difficult of access, with a quite arbitrary and literal conception of England as the scene in which the action of his poem takes place.

⁴ Letter to Raleigh. The Queen was at Kenilworth 19 days, but only 12 are accounted for by Laneham.

II. *Celtic Faerie in Spenser*

Celtic originals and analogues of certain parts of the *Faerie Queene* are more frequent than has been supposed. The subject is too broad for complete study here; it merits a thorough investigation by a specialist in Celtic who also knows Spenser's work well enough to be aware of certain peculiarities in his method. My purpose is merely to indicate several characteristics of Spenser's use of this fairy magic, which differs from his employment of ordinary romance conventions, in order to make clear a special definition of the fairy *dramatis personae* in his poem.

Sometimes a similarity between one of Spenser's stories and one by Ariosto or Tasso conceals the ultimate sources. Britomart is like Bradamante in many respects; her name and some details Spenser takes from the pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris*; yet the most important fact about her is something quite distinct from either the Italian or the Latin source. It is as though one should identify the story of the Lady of the Lake, cited above, with some classical source because Triton and Arion figure in it. Spenser's method is composite; a brief incident, even a stanza, may reflect many elements. For this reason, the study of his sources is fraught with peculiar perils. Thus, Artegal's captivity by Radigund is thoroughly rationalized, yet it is unquestionably related to the large number of legends in which a mortal is captured by a *fée* who offers him her love, with imprisonment as a penalty for refusal. Of clearer significance is the episode in which Calidore comes upon Colin piping while the three Graces, with Rosalind in addition, are dancing (VI. x). This scene is filled, after Spenser's wont, with reminiscences of the classics; there is also the pastoral setting of the shepherd piping to his lass; there is the compliment contained in her inclusion among the Graces, and the reminiscence, comparatively late in the life of the poet, of the Rosalind of his youth. But underneath is a thread of pure Celtic folklore, as the following analysis of the incident will show:

Calidore, separated from Pastorella for a time, wanders into a place that is "far from all people's troad." The scene passes all others on earth in beauty,—a hill in the midst of a plain bordered about with woods of matchless height, so that the trees seem to disdain the earth. At the foot of the hill a gentle stream flows; to its pure waters no beast or clown

may come near. By the banks, guarding the stream and the hill, are Nymphs and Fairies; they sing to the accompaniment of the water's fall. As Calidore approaches the hill, he hears sweet music and the sound of dancing feet. He does not venture into the open, but peeping from the covert of the woods has a sight of a hundred maidens dancing; in the midst are three others, who in turn surround a damsel like the precious gem in the midst of a ring. This damsel is crowned with a rose garland, and is continually pelted by flowers thrown upon her by the dancers. Calidore gazes long at the sight, uncertain whether it is a company of Venus' followers, or nymphs, or fairies, or an "enchanted show." At length he approaches, to test the reality of what he sees, but all vanish save the shepherd Colin.

Despite the classical myth and the pastoral conventions in this passage, the foundation is that of the fairy vision, widely known in folklore. Colin, a mortal in love with a *fée*, has become an inhabitant of her world. His life is so happy that Calidore, momentarily forgetting his own love

had no will away to fare,
But wisht that with that shepheard he mote dwelling share.

All the details,—the fairy hill, far-off from human pathway, guarded by fairies against the approach of anything unclean; the fairy music, heard from a great distance; the hundred dancers, the *fée* herself in the center of the group; the disappearance at the approach of a mortal not initiated into the mysteries of the fairy folk,—all these are commonplaces in folk tradition. Even today in Ireland, peasants tell of the music of the "good people," of the sacred hills, of the dancers.⁵

The incident just analyzed gives pretty clear proof of Spenser's acquaintance with the fairy traditions of the folk. There are good reasons for believing that he must have known many such traditions. His friendship with the Sidneys (Sir Henry was for a time Lord President of Wales); his antiquarian instincts, manifested not only in his prolonged study of many ancient chronicles in preparation for writing the chronicle passages in the *Faerie Queene*, but also in his prose tract on Ireland, in which he shows no little knowledge of folk customs and belief; the fact that he lived in Ireland for ten years before publishing the first part of

⁵ For illustrations recently taken down from the lips of peasants see Wentz, *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, pp. 31-32; 79-80; 296 ff. See also Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, pp. 90-91, and the index.

the poem, to say nothing of the relation between the subject-matter of that poem and the stuff with which folk tradition deals,—are all reasons for expecting that in so long a poem, written by a man of wide learning and interests, we should find materials of this nature. It may also be noted that he introduces Welsh words into his chronicle, and that he recognizes in the tract on Ireland the affinity among the languages spoken in Ireland, Cornwall, and Wales. Most, if not all, of the *Faerie Queene* as we have it was written in Ireland; Spenser could not but have heard many tales about the *Sidhe* folk; his poem reflects this kind of learning as well as classical philosophy and the thousand other things with which it is filled.

The story of Guyon, for instance, is full of suggestions of Celtic *faerie*. The prologue, as already noted, contains the distinction between the mysterious Otherworld realm and the literal identification of Fairy Land with Britain. Guyon's principal adventures are three in number, and they are closely related. The first is the Phaedria episode, which fundamentally is the story of a *fée* who dwells in an enchanted island to which she lures mortals whom she desires to become her lovers. One of these, Cymochles, is already in her power when she tempts Guyon. Her island is reached by a magic boat, to which she invites her victim, but which moves of its own volition. The island is filled with flowers; wonderful music is heard. But Guyon is "wise, and wary of her will," so the enchantress has no power over him. Some details Spenser assuredly owes to Tasso's story of Armida, also a story of a *Dame du Lac*, but the management of the episode is such as to leave no doubt that he had in mind also other stories of amorous fays.⁶

Guyon's second adventure is the journey to the Underworld (canto VII), equally well known in romance and tradition. This episode owes much to classical literature, as Warton pointed out,⁷ but here again Spenser adds many details not to be so explained.

Guyon meets, in a "gloomy glade" very remote from all human habitation, an uncouth wight who guards a treasure. Seeing the knight

⁶ For a discussion of the *fée* known as *La Dame du Lac* see Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, pp. 167 ff. Miss Paton gives also a long list of instances in which a magic boat is employed as a means of entering the fairy world. p. 16, n. 1.

⁷ *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, pp. 55 ff.

approach, the old man tries to hide his treasure, but is too late. Therefore he proposes that Guyon shall serve him. After some parley, the knight enters the Underworld, where he sees first, vast treasures; next, the goddess of worldly ambition (a beautiful woman whom the old man proposes to Guyon as his *amie*); and finally the garden of Proserpine, which is filled with trees bearing golden apples. The climax of the temptation is reached when the old man begs Guyon to take some of the golden fruit and to rest on a silver stool under the tree.

This story finds many analogues in Celtic folk tradition. Warton criticizes it as violating the pagan myth.⁸ The answer is that Spenser was not depending on classical tradition alone; he is quite as much influenced, for example, by stories of the visit of a hero of romance to the Underworld; Arthur and Cúchulainn among others. The old man who guards a fairy hill is a stock character; sometimes he is a *leprechaun*, who guards a treasure that he tries to hide when he is caught by a mortal; sometimes he is a fairy king. Again, the idea that to touch any object in the Underworld will necessitate remaining in the power of the fairy owner is not only a part of the Proserpina myth, but of Celtic folk tradition generally. The very nature of Guyon's temptation: the offer of riches, love, fame, is in the story of Murrough.⁹ Guyon's sight of souls suffering the tortures of hell, which seems to owe something to Dante, is analogous to the legends about magic islands converted into places of eternal punishment. But the most significant detail is that of the apples. Since Warton's time the relation between Spenser's account of the Garden of Proserpina and Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* has been recognized. In this we have the famous golden bough. But while Warton sees in the silver stool "a new circumstance of temptation," he does not explain it. In Celtic tradition resting beneath an apple tree subjected one to danger from fays. Lancelot, for example, is sleeping under an apple tree when he is seized by fays and carried into captivity.¹⁰ Ogier comes to an orchard, eats an apple, and is soon in the power of Morgain. Avalon is "apple land." Cormac takes a branch bearing three golden apples on the invitation of an old man and this is the prelude to a series of adventures in the

⁸ P. 57: "As the mythology of the Pagans was their religion, the violation of it is hardly excusable."

⁹ Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 440.

¹⁰ In the prose *Lancelot*. Cited by Paton, pp. 51-52, and the notes.

Otherworld.¹¹ When Teigue reached the Happy Otherworld there were in it many red-laden apple trees, and at the third *dún* the hero met a mortal youth, with his *amie*, and the apple which caused his captivity was still in his hand, since it renewed itself as fast as it could be consumed.¹² The journey of Teigue through the Otherworld is somewhat like Guyon's, in that there is a series of magic palaces. But the temptation motif is not stressed.

Besides his reference to the apple as a means of binding a mortal to the powers of the Otherworld, Spenser may also have in mind another commonplace, the cauldron of plenty, as the basis for his vivid description of the dwarfs stirring the cauldrons filled with molten gold. Arthur made a journey to Annwn, similar to Cúchulainn's raid on the stronghold of Scáth, to get possession of such a cauldron.¹³ Spenser's substitution of a scene that reminds one of a modern blast-furnace more than of anything suggesting food is explicable because of the peculiar nature of the temptation to which Guyon is being subjected. But the dwarfs stirring the treasure cauldrons are good fairy folk. As to the temptation motif, though it is perfectly true that the majority of tales in which a mortal becomes a denizen of *faerie* through some such device of enchantment as the apple convey the sense of good fortune rather than of sin, there is precedent for Spenser's idea that the good man will refuse to be so entrapped. For example, there is the adventure of Collen:

Collen is summoned on three successive days to an interview with Gwyn ab Nûd, king of Annwn, "on the top of the hill at noon."¹⁴ After the third summons, he obeys, and enters from the hill a fair castle filled with beautiful youths and damsels and with the most exquisite music. The king welcomes Collen and desires him to eat. "I will not eat the leaves of the tree," says Collen, and after some further parley, he throws holy water on their heads, and they vanish, "so that there was neither castle, nor troops, nor men, nor maidens, nor music, nor song, nor steeds, nor

¹¹ Cited by Wentz, pp. 340 ff.

¹² Cited by Wentz, 348 ff. See also Paton, p. 3.

¹³ Skene, *Four Ancient Books*, I, 264-266; 276.

¹⁴ For stories about Gwyn, who was a Fairy King well-known in Welsh tradition, see Rhys, 341, 364, 391, etc.; *Mabinogion* ed. Guest, 263. His castle was on Glastonbury Tor. According to one tradition, he was the lover of Cordelia, daughter of Lear. Certain features of his story,—his connection with the underworld, his rule over the elves, etc., suggest Spenser's Guyon. Spenser stresses Guyon's connection with the elves.

youths, nor banquet, nor the appearance of any thing whatever, but the green hillocks."¹⁵

The last of Guyon's adventures is the two days' journey to the enchanted island which contained Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. Here the debt to Tasso for details is more marked than in the Phaedria passage, though both incidents go back to the familiar Celtic theme. On the way to the island, Guyon and his companions pass other enchanted islands, on one of which they see

A daintie damsel dressing of her heare,
By whom a little skippet floting did appeare.

(II, xii, 14)

She calls to them but they pass on. There is no need to summarize the familiar story of the Bower. Acrasia is a *fée*, and when Guyon and his companions find her she is in the company of her mortal lover. The whole adventure is motivated by Guyon's acceptance, at the beginning of his book, of the task of avenging the babe with bloody hands, whose father had been enticed by the *fée* and his mother driven to suicide because of the tragedy. Thus Acrasia possesses the characteristic of so many *fées*, cruelty and lust.

Finally, it is worth observing that these three adventures of Guyon, producing as they do a totality of effect quite different from anything in Tasso or Ariosto, suggest the Celtic *imrama*. Two of the three fairy worlds in which the marvelous adventures take place are islands, reached by a journey over seas filled with marvels. The other, the Underworld to which the strange old man leads Guyon, is not an island, but it is curious to observe that Spenser introduces the incident by comparing his hero's course to that of a mariner on perilous wave.¹⁶ On the way to the Bower of Bliss, also, Guyon and his companions pass other marvelous islands, on which a hero like Maelduin or like Bran, for instance, would have stopped for delightful adventures. Other comparisons with the

¹⁵ Summarized from Lady Charlotte Guest's version in the *Mabinogion*, pp. 264-265. It is also in Rhys, *Arthurian Legend*, pp. 338-340.

¹⁶ The Celts, according to Rhys (*Arthurian Legend*, pp. 329-330), had two ideas about the realm of the dead. One was an island, the other "a fairy settlement entered through a hill such as Mider inhabited in some Irish legends, and such as the fairies are most commonly believed to inhabit in Wales." A *tor* might be called an "island" in Welsh; so it was with Glastonbury (Avalon).

imrama will suggest themselves to any one who has followed the discussion of Guyon's adventures.¹⁷ Guyon's story owed much to other sources, but the influence of Celtic romance is constant and pervasive.

Besides these stories of *faerie*, all of which are more or less overlaid with materials drawn from other sources, and besides the casual references to fairy characters and incidents, such, for example, as the ensnaring of Merlin by the Lady of the Lake (III, iii, 7 ff.), there are two illustrations of the belief in *fées* that should be noted. The first of these is the story of Agapè (IV, ii, 44-45), in which Spenser follows exactly the traditions about the skill in leech-craft, mastery of the secrets of nature, and ability to attract to her whomsoever she might desire popularly supposed to belong to these creatures. Of the mother of Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond, we read:

Their mother was a Fay, and had the skill
Of secret things, and all the powres of nature,
Which she by art could use unto her will,
And to her service bind each living creature,
Through secret understanding of their feature.
Thereto she was right faire, whenso her face
She list discover, and of goodly stature:
But she, as Feyes are wont, in privie place
Did spend her dayes, and lov'd in forests wyld to space.

There on a day a noble youthly knight,
Seeking adventures in the salvage wood,
Did by great fortune get of her the sight
As she sate carelesse by a cristall flood
Combing her golden lockes, as seemed her good;
And unawares upon her laying hold,
That strove in vaine him long to have withstood,
Oppressed her, and there (as it is told)
Got these three lovely babes, that prov'd three champions bold.

In this account it should be observed that the fay is of "goodly stature," like the Irish *Sidhe* folk, not one of the "little people" who constitute a different fairy race. Irish peasants still speak of

¹⁷ Those who see in the Mammon passage, for instance, nothing but Vergilian influence, may find interest in a paper on "Vergil's *Aeneid* and the Irish *Imrama*: Zimmer's Theory," by W. F. Thrall, in *Modern Philology*, December, 1917. Mr. Thrall, of course, says nothing about Spenser.

these "good people" as of majestic appearance and marvellous beauty. They are the subjects of Dana, a fairy queen. It is in some such sense that Spenser conceives his fairies, who have nothing in common with the fairy tribe celebrated in Shakespeare, Jonson, Herrick, and other poets. Spenser's fairy also resembles the *Sidhe* people in that she reveals herself to mortals when she wishes; ordinarily it is only by a happy chance that a mortal may surprise one of her race. Finally, it is possible that Spenser may here be using a story to the effect that the Earl of Desmond one day saw Aine, a *fée*, combing her hair on the bank of the river Carmóg, near Lough Gur. He was infatuated by her beauty and gained control over her through seizing her cloak. From their union was born the enchanted hero Geróid, who lives in the underlake world.¹⁸ If this conjecture is correct, we have direct proof of Spenser's acquaintance with Irish fairy stories.

We now turn to Arthur's vision of the Fairy Queen:

After his rescue of Redcross, Arthur tells the story of his vision to the knight and Una, in response to their question as to what had brought him to Fairy Land. One day, tired out with riding, he alighted from his horse and lay down to sleep. In a dream, a "royall Mayd" came to him and declared her love, saying that this, "when just time expired, should appeare." Never was heart so ravished with delight, nor did living man ever hear such lovely words as she spoke. When she left him, she said that she was "Queene of Faeries." He awoke, to find that it was not all dream, for the impression of her form remained on the grass beside him. Since that day, he has spent his whole time in searching for her, but without success. (I, ix, 13-15.)

This incident requires very little explanation, since it introduces the well-known fairy mistress theme. A *fée* is enamored of a young knight, appears to him in a vision or while he is resting after an adventure, and offers him her love. Usually they are at once united. The lover is warned not to tell any one about his *amie*, or some other prohibition is put upon him. If he disobeys, as is often the case, his *amie* disappears and he searches for her, often without success, for a long time. The fairy mistress aids her lover in war, and becomes his protectress. Familiar illustrations of the theme are the stories of Thomas Rhymer, of Ogier, of Lanval, etc. Morgain the Fay often figures in such episodes; she is not only

¹⁸ The story is told by Wentz, *Fairy Faith*, p. 79.

amorous but also possesses certain characteristics of the Irish war goddess, the Morrigan.¹⁹ The Lady of the Lake instructs her lovers in the arts of war.²⁰ Both Morgain and the Lady of the Lake are powerful *fées* who are connected with Arthur in various stories.

III. *Fairies and Britons*

The significance of the vision of the Fairy Queen is that by this device Spenser is able to establish the basis on which his poem rests. The traditional Arthur was a British king about whose birth many mysterious legends clustered, and who, at the end of his life, was received in *Faerie*, after that last great battle in the West, to be healed of his grievous wound by Morgain, or *La Dame du Lac*, or by these and other powerful fays together.²¹ After a long sojourn in *Faerie*, he was to come again and rule Britain. This belief is extant in parts of Wales today, as it was in Layamon's time. Lydgate phrases it compactly:

He [Arthur] is a king y-crowned in Fairye;
With sceptre and pall, and with his regalty,
Shall he resort, as lord and soveraigne
Out of Fairye, and reigne in Britaine.

(*Falls of Princes*, VIII, 24.)

Spenser's use of this tradition about the fairy sovereign gives the clue to the idea on which the entire poem rests. The interpretation is to be found in the return, through the Welsh house of Tudor, of the old British line to the throne of England, now long occupied by strangers. To state the proposition concisely: *Spenser conceives the Tudor rule as a return of the old British line; he conceives Elizabeth Tudor as the particular sovereign, coming out of Faerie, whose return fulfils the old prophecy.* That is to say, the poem is at once a glorification of Elizabeth's ancestry and a glorification of the Queen as an individual. Had England's greatness in the last two decades of the sixteenth century, Spenser's time, an era which the poet recognized as not only putting the realm on a new footing of prosperity and power but also as marking the beginning of a far-reaching imperial policy,—had this greatness come during

¹⁹ See Paton, *Fairy Mythology*, index s. v. "Morrigan."

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 170 ff.

²¹ See Paton, ch. iii, and Rhys, ch. xiv.

the rule of a Tudor king, Spenser would have figured that king under the name of Prince Arthur. But his sovereign was a woman. The prophecy, then, is fulfilled through personifying, in Arthur, the spirit of Great Britain, now united to the Faerie Queene herself. This is not only an excellent poetical device; it is also a most interesting development of the Arthurian legend, true to the spirit of that legend if not to its letter. It is also quite in keeping with Spenser's method of complex allegory, a method by which different qualities and forces, different attributes of perfection, are, like Plato's *ideas*, embodied now in one concrete form and now in another.

These statements are, I think, capable of nearly formal proof. To begin with, there is a sharp distinction, throughout the *Faerie Queene*, between *fairy* knight and British. Thus, Artegal is a changeling, not a fairy:

He wonneth in the land of Fayeree,
Yet is no fairy borne, ne sib at all
To Elfes, but sprong of seed terrestriall,
And whylom by false fairies stolen away. (III, iii, 26.)

Guyon, on the other hand, is "elfin borne"; he was of noble state and "mickle worship in his native land"; he had been knighted by Huon (II. i. 6). Amphisa was a fairy "by race" (III. vi. 4). Priamond and his brothers were born of a fay (IV. ii. 44). Redcross, however, was "sprong out from English race, However now accompted Elfins sonne." The Hermit goes on to explain that he came from the ancient race of Saxon kings, but was stolen as a child by a fairy who left her own child and took Redcross to fairy land where he was brought up by a ploughman.²² Furthermore, Prince Arthur, not a fairy but a "Briton knight," seeks Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, whom he has seen in a vision. Her image he bears on his shield. Guyon, a Fairy knight, promises to aid him in his quest, and they are companions throughout the second book. In the House of Alma they read with delight ancient chronicles that set forth the origin of each: Arthur reads *Briton Moniments* and Guyon *Antiquitee of Faery Lond.*

²² I, x, 60-67. Compare the "Birth of St. George," in Percy, and the story of the "weird ladye of the woods." The Hermit tells Redcross that he is to be known as "Saint George of mery England."

Summarizing the evidence thus far, we note: (1) the careful distinction between the two classes of knights, a distinction that is preserved both for the great knights and for the lesser figures as well. (2) The hero of Book I is a Briton; of Book II is a Fairy. Yet there is no distinction in appearance, size or personal character, the distinction is of race. Both classes of knights perform valorous deeds against enchantment; the Fairy possesses no supernatural power, for example, as against the Briton. (3) Arthur, contrary to certain folk traditions, is not a fairy sovereign; Gloriana is.

We come now to a consideration of the place of the chronicles in the *Faerie Queene*. These are found in II. x., in which is given a rhymed chronicle of British kings from Brutus to Uther, and in III. iii., where the history is continued in the form of Merlin's prophecy to Britomart concerning her descendants as far as Cadwallader, last of the kings. Only Arthur and his son are omitted. Miss Carrie M. Harper, in her excellent study of the sources of Spenser's history, has suggested that the British point of view and the interest in Welsh tradition, "may be partly accounted for by the Welsh blood of the Tudors."²³ It is safe to go much farther than this. Far from being mere episodes, these chronicles are important structurally. This is indicated by the elaborate invocations prefixed to the cantos containing the historical material, and also by Spenser's repeated statements that in this poem he is celebrating the ancestry of the Queen.²⁴ Moreover, while Spenser's chronicle deals only with British kings and is thus a recognition of Elizabeth's British ancestry, the point is driven home by means of the fairy chronicle, which is definitely referred to the Tudor house. Most of the fairy monarchs have the word *elf* incorporated in their names, from Elfe, the founder of the dynasty, who wedded a fay, through Elfin,²⁵ Elfinan, Elfiline, Elfinell, Elfant, Elfar,

²³ *Sources of the British Chronicle History in Spenser's Faerie Queene*, p. 181.

²⁴ Compare, for example, II., Prologue, st. iv, where the English realm is called the "lond of Faery" and in this "antique ymage" the Queen is asked to see her "great auncestry." See also the invocations to II. x., and III. iii.

²⁵ The name Elphin is often met in Welsh folk tales. One hero of that name was the finder of the bard Taliessin. See *Mabinogion*, ed. Guest, p. 325; Rhys, p. 318, etc.

Elfinor, down to Elficleos, who is identified with Henry VII. Oberon (Henry VIII) succeeded, since Elferon (Prince Arthur) died before his father, and the last reigning monarch is Tanaquil (Gloriana), by whom Spenser means Elizabeth.²⁶

By this means Spenser is able to bridge the gap in chronology necessary to his design; he omits all reference to Saxon or Norman kings, or to kings of England prior to Henry VII. The past, both near and remote, is blended with the present. Arthur and Gloriana are in one sense the ancestors of Elizabeth; in another sense they are now living, rulers of England.²⁷ This fact may be plainly seen if we add to these two chronicles the revelation of Britomart's descendants as given to her by Merlin (III. iii. 26 ff.). Artegall, whom Britomart is to wed, is not a fairy, though he thinks he was born from the union of an elf with a fay. In truth, Merlin says, he is son of Gorlois and brother of the Cornish king, Cador. The name Artegall comes from the chronicles and, as Miss Harper observes (pp. 143-144), the device makes up for the omission of the historical Arthur here and in Book II. At the end of Merlin's list of kings we are told that the Britons will be driven out first by a Raven (the Danes) and then by the Lion of Neustria (William of Normandy), but that "when the term is full accomplished . . . a sparke of fire" shall break forth from Mona and

So shall the Briton blood their crowne agayn reclame.²⁸

Thus Spenser once more covers the period from 1228 when Llewellyn, the last British prince, gave up Wales and retired to Anglesey (Mona), where Henry VII was afterwards born. By this means the chronological interim is bridged, as by the device of the fairy genealogy in II, x, and we are once more brought to the Tudor regime.

Preparatory to an interpretation of these facts it is necessary to recall the various aspects under which Elizabeth appears. As

²⁶ The passage is in II. x. 70 ff. The Welsh word for Elves is *Ellyllon*, a point not without significance here.

²⁷ Thus, for example, in II. x. 4 Spenser says that Elizabeth's name, realm, and race come from Prince Arthur. Here he is thinking of the historical Arthur, ancestor of Elizabeth in the literal sense.

²⁸ Mona is one of the "Isles of the Dead," like Avalon (Glastonbury), according to Rhys, p. 356. Thus the fairy-return idea comes once more.

Gloriana, she typifies not only the glory but the "rule" of England.²⁹ As Belpheobe and, to a certain extent, as Britomart, she typifies chastity. But as Britomart she is primarily representative of British power, the warlike might of England.³⁰ As Mercilla, she is Elizabeth the merciful, the poet's interpretation of her unwillingness to sentence Mary of Scotland to death. She is also, of course, Cynthia, a conception parallel to that of Belpheobe; and Tanaquil, the daughter of Henry VIII. Of all these conceptions, that of Gloriana *plus* Britomart is by far the most constant and important. The union between Arthur and Gloriana and that between Artegal and Britomart then become significant of Spenser's fundamental conception in the structure of the poem. How closely knit the two stories are is indicated by the facts, already pointed out, that Artegal parallels Arthur in an important sense in the chronicles, and that Britomart, in Book III at least, plays Arthur's rôle. The full significance of this conception it is now possible to define.

By *Fairy* Spenser means *Welsh*, or, more accurately, *Tudor*, as distinguished from the general term British. He looks on England as Britain, ignoring, for the purpose of his poem, post-Conquest history.³¹ The Tudor dynasty, therefore, brings back the ancient British line, and one purpose of the poem is to celebrate this fact in compliment to the Queen. But Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, is *Elizabeth Tudor*. The old British spirit, the real England, represented in Prince Arthur, finds in her "glory," in the rich connota-

²⁹ See the *Letter*, the proem to II, stanzas 4 and 5, and the proem to III, st. 5.

³⁰ Strictly speaking, the third book deals with the rescue of Amoret. Scudamore, the knight who should be the hero of the book, does not succeed in accomplishing his "adventure," so Britomart comes to his assistance. Thus Britomart is the counterpart of Arthur in the other books, with the difference that while Arthur renders assistance to Redcross and Guyon in their hour of need, each of the titular heroes of the first two books achieves his final "adventure" without any aid from the "greatest knight in the world." It is this well-known romance convention that Spenser makes use of in his poem, not the idea that no one virtue is sufficient but that Magnificence includes them all.

³¹ The words "England" and "English" occur only a few times in the entire *F. Q.* St. George (Redcross) belongs to "mery England"; he is sprung from "English race," born of "English blood" (I. x. 60-64). The only other examples of the use of the word have nothing to do with what is discussed in this paper.

tion given that term in the Renaissance, and also the powerful government ("rule"—see the proem to III, stanza 5) that was making England a great European power and was the prophecy of the coming British imperialism. Thus the epic celebrates both the ancestry of Elizabeth, the return of the old British strain, and also her greatness as an individual. The title that Spenser chooses for his poem takes on new significance.

It remains only to add that the Britomart-Artegal story relates primarily to Great Britain. The deeds of Artegal, for example, as I have pointed out elsewhere,³² reflect the international relations of Elizabeth's government, especially the conflict with Philip of Spain. But the Arthur-Gloriana story, complementary to this, is concerned with the return of the native British race to power. Spenser has left evidence of this distinction in the passage (III, ii, 7-8) in which Britomart says that she has come from her "native soyle, that is by name The greater Britaine," to "Faery lond," where she has heard that many famous knights and ladies dwell. That is, fairy land, for the moment, is Wales, the last stronghold of Britain. This is quite in agreement with the entire conception. Avalon, Fairy Land, Wales, is ruled by a *fée* who became the protector of Arthur, healed his wound, and preserved him until the time for his return, in the Tudor house, to worldly empire. The only addition that Spenser makes is that the great *fée*, in the person of Elizabeth, herself assumes the rule of Great Britain.

In September of 1914, Lloyd George was addressing a great throng of Welshmen. He spoke of the worth of little nations, such as those for whom England entered upon war with Germany. The greatest literature of England, he said, came from her when she was a nation the size of Belgium and, like Belgium of to-day, was fighting a great empire. In Greece, in the Netherlands, in Italy, and in Germany and France are places where Britons have died for the freedom of other lands than their own. "If we had stood by when two little nations were being crushed and broken," he said, "our shame would have rung down the everlasting ages." At the close he spoke of a valley in North Wales, sheltered by mountain and sea, from which the boys were in the habit of climbing to the hill-tops to have a glimpse of the distant mountains and of the

³² "Spenser and British Imperialism," *Modern Philology*, January, 1912.

spectacle of the great valley in which were their homes. So through sacrifice and pain England has come to the hill-tops of vision;—"the great peaks of honour we had forgotten—duty and patriotism clad in glittering white. . . . We shall descend into the valleys again, but as long as the men and women of this generation last they will carry in their hearts the image of these great mountain peaks, whose foundations are unshaken though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war." He must have been thinking of Snowdon, sacred with memories of Arthur and of Welsh heroes, and of Harlech, or Mona which preserved that "spark of fire" that was to live again in Gloriana the Faerie Queene.

In the union of Britomart and Artegall, British might and British justice, Spenser found the strength that was to free England from the menace of Spanish tyranny and the mission that was to make her the champion of those who were oppressed. In the union of Prince Arthur and Gloriana the native race regained the realm from which it had long been dispossessed, such a return as the Welsh shepherds still dream of,—“Arthur and his men dozing away in a cave until the peal of destiny ring them forth to the field of battle.”³³ England has many heroes,—warriors, statesmen, poets,—who would passionately desire to return from Avalon, or Mona, or some other of the Isles of the Dead to join their might with England's now that once more the peal of destiny has rung; but among them all none would respond more eagerly than he who looked through Merlin's magic glass upon the Britain of Elizabeth Tudor. For from the country of Arthur and Gloriana has come, to fulfil once more the ancient prophecy, a Welshman who wields a power far greater than theirs, but whose task is the same.

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³³ Rhys, p. 368.